(1) **Modes and harmonies** that were considered non-normative in the era and place where the work was composed. This category of features is vast and varied. In the art music of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and in many film scores, popular songs, and Broadway shows of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the norm consisted/consists of what music theorists call "functional tonality" or the major-minor tonal system. One should immediately note that, from around 1850 onward, many art-music composers began to enrich the major and minor modes, break down the distinction between them, and create or elaborate new modes (e.g., Aeolian, whole-tone, and octatonic) and harmonic practices (bitonal, atonal, dodecaphonic). Some film composers have followed suit. But, even in the contexts of more "extended" and alternative harmonic practices, the basic "tool" defined in the first sentence remained (and remains) available for evoking the exotic, namely using modes and harmonies different from whatever was (or is) the prevailing norm in the given work – or in other works in that genre at that time and place. (For simplicity's sake, style features nos. 2–6 are worded with regard to the basic major-minor tonal system.)

(2) One sub-category of style feature no. 1: pentatonic (e.g., black-key) and other so-called **"gapped" scales**, with their strong implications of simplicity and, hence, of stable, unchanging sociocultural conditions.

(3) Another sub-category of style feature no. 1 (and almost the opposite in means and effect from no. 2): **intense chromaticism** and constantly **shifting harmonies**, which may move purposefully toward a goal, slither sinuously, or yank about jerkily.

(4) Somewhat in between style features 2 and 3: **modes and scales with chromatically "altered" notes**; and **whole-tone** and **octatonic** scales. In the first of these possibilities, the chromatic alterations may include such things as the lowering of the second scalar degree (e.g., D♭ in the C-major or C-minor scale), raising of the fourth (F♯), and a fluctuating treatment – sometimes natural, sometimes

flatted – of the sixth (A) and seventh (B). The second possibility, whole-tone writing, is valued in part because it tends to deprive the listener of a home tonality. All the notes being the same distance apart, the listener cannot determine – without other factors, such as a long-held pedal tone in the accompaniment – which note in the scale is "home." The third possibility, octatonic writing, is somewhat similar to whole-tone in that it constructs its scales systematically, except that their notes are, in alternation, a whole step and a half step apart (see Chapter 9). Again, a sense of "tonic," if the composer desires it, needs to be achieved by a pedal or other means.

(5) Related to style feature no. 2 above: **bare textures**, such as unharmonized unisons or octaves, parallel fourths or fifths, and drones (pedal points – whether tonic or open-fifth); and **static harmonies** (often based on a single chord; or employing two chords in lengthy, perhaps slowish oscillation).

(6) The opposite of style feature no. 5 (and related to style features nos. 3 and 4 above): **complex and inherently undefined chords** (sometimes described as "magical" or "mystical") that, because they can resolve in several ways, operate in unpredictable ways; or chords that are cacophonous or cluster-like.

(7) Distinctive repeated **rhythmic or melodic patterns**, sometimes deriving from dances of the country or group being portrayed; or repeated (ostinato) rhythms – for example in an instrumental accompaniment – that are not distinctive (not inherently marked as to origin) but nonetheless suggest either Otherness (by their rigid insistence) or rural-ness (by their resemblance, general or specific, to the recurring patterns of folk dance). Certain exotic styles make use of rhythmic complexities considered characteristic of the location (e.g., the polyrhythms of Caribbean, sub-Saharan African, Middle Eastern, and Indonesian musical traditions).

(8) Opera arias – or melodies in instrumental works – that are more like **simple songs**, hence are presumably more typical of simple folk, whether in rural locations of the home

country or in places far away. Sometimes opera arias of this sort are flagged by a genre designation such as Romance. (This is not to say that all arias called "Romance" are exotic.)

(9) Vocal passages that evoke ritualistic (and incomprehensible) **chanting** by means of extended melismas on "Ah!" or nonsense syllables in free rhythm. Or (as in the case of despotic legalistic decrees) by declamation in a **monotone** and to a rigid, undifferentiated rhythm. Also various **"cries"** – such as the riveting "Aoua!" in Ravel's *Chansons madécasses* – or other musical highlighting of **unusual words** that are supposedly typical or indicative of the culture in question. Yet another possibility: use of **local linguistic variants** that are understood as bizarre or peculiar, such as the *lingua franca* in various Turkish and other Middle Eastern works of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

(10) **Instrumental lines** that are the presumed equivalent of the **melismas** common in many traditional vocal styles (e.g., *rāga*-based singing in India) and also in many traditional instrumental styles (*vīnā* playing). These instrumental lines may take the form of extended "arabesque"-style wind or violin solos that are perceived as being "arabesque"-like, not only by their curling shape but because they make heavy use of unbroken chains of escape-note figures such as are indeed found in much Middle Eastern music.

(11) **Departures from normative types of continuity** or compositional patterning and forward flow. These departures may include "asymmetrical" phrase structure, "rhapsodic" melodic motion, sudden pauses or long notes (or quick notes), and intentionally "excessive" repetition (of, for example, short melodic fragments using a few notes close together; or of accompanimental rhythms, as noted in style feature no. 7 above).

(12) **Quick ornaments** used obtrusively or over-predictably, and presumably intended to be perceived as decorative encrustation – or as dissonant, nerve-jangling annoyance – rather than as organically integrated design. The "arabesque" solos mentioned in style feature no. 10 above are based on this principle of ornament (but repeat the ornamental feature many times in quick succession).

(13) **Foreign musical instruments**, or Western ones that are used in ways that make them sound foreign, for example xylophone, which, played pentatonically, can signify East and Southeast Asia; or specific piano figurations that evoke a Spanish guitar or Hungarian (or Hungarian-Gypsy) cimbalom. Also, instruments that are used in a context that is unusual for them. Particularly valuable for a composer in these various regards are woodwind instruments, such as flute, oboe, or (more striking because it is rarely used in Western art music) English horn, especially when any of these is given an extensive solo of an "arabesque" or a "melancholy-minor" type. Likewise valuable are unpitched percussion instruments, such as tom-tom, conga, and darabukka (to mention three relatively culture-specific options) but also the more generic ones: tambourine, bass drum, triangle, gong, and small bells.

(14) **Highly distinctive instrumental techniques** (and also techniques that are more usual – such as portamento, pizzicato, or double stops – but used in an unusual context). Also, emphatically regular (stomping, relentless) performance of repeated rhythms. Or the opposite: flexible, floating, "timeless" rendition of vocal melismas or instrumental solos (see style features nos. 9, 10, and 13 above).

(15) Distinctive uses of **vocal range and tessitura** (e.g., the "sultry" – to use a standard, freighted term – mezzo-soprano voice), and unusual styles of vocal production ("darkened" sound, throbbing vibrato, lack of vibrato, etc.).

Figure 3.1 Stylistic features within Western music that are often employed (especially in combination) to suggest an exotic locale or culture

from
Ralph Locke, Musical Exoticism: Images & Reflections (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009): 51-54